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Introduction. Translating Feminism: Transfer, Transgression, Transformation (1950s-1980s)

Maud Anne Bracke, Penelope Morris, Emily Ryder

1. Scholarly contexts and interdisciplinary concepts

This Forum brings together four articles which present case studies exploring the actors, contexts, sites and practices of inter-lingual translation, in a context of feminist debate, activism and writing. While the papers each aim to illustrate and critically address the historical contexts, actors and practices of specific case studies of translation, the present introduction aims to engage such findings in a reflection on the nature and historical development of translation as a socially and culturally embedded process. This is a work in progress, resonating with the rapidly growing historical research on transnationalism and gender on the one hand, and the history of feminism on the other.¹ We aim to present elements of a theoretical framework that can enrich historical approaches to translation and gender history, and which borrows from both feminist theory and Translation Studies. The four articles presented here are all situated in contexts of political activism, whether explicitly feminist or in other ways aimed at social justice for women or equality between the sexes. Each paper demonstrates the variety of ways in which feminist agents have aimed to understand, locally re-contextualise and politically operationalise a text, a vocabulary, or a set of ideas that originated in a different cultural context. What exactly happens to a text when it is integrated into a receiving culture, why is this text translated and re-contextualised rather than others, what purpose does it serve in the host culture, how is it turned into a socially

meaningful discourse which might trigger responses, and by whom?² The present Forum includes contributions on interpretations of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* in post-war Japan (Julia Bullock), feminist transfers between Yugoslavia, France and Italy during the Cold War (Chiara Bonfiglioli), English translations of East German author Christa Wolf in the 1970s-80s (Caroline Summers), and the self-translation practices of Brazilian feminist writer and black activist Lelia de Almeida Gonzalez (Ana Margerida Dias Martins).

Historians engage with issues of translation in a number of ways. For the past fifteen or so years, a number of historians and translation theorists have attempted to build bridges between the two academic fields, working towards a sub-discipline sometimes referred to as 'translation history'. Overall, the aim is to construct historical narratives of how translation practices and ideas around translation have changed over time in a variety of settings, and to trace the wider cultural implications of translation work. As proposed by Anthony Pym, a key thinker in translation history, the focus for historians looking at translation as a cultural phenomenon should be on translators (defined broadly) as social actors operating in intercultural spaces. Translation history focuses on observing translation practices, and herein lies the main distinction with the more theoretical branches of Translation Studies, which aim to establish standards and principles of translation.³ In recent years, much important work has been conducted, notably in French, on how translation history can be approached methodologically. Among others, Lieven D'Hulst has stressed the political intentionality of translators and their ability to de-stabilise conventional social meaning, specifically in contexts of social upheaval.⁴ On the other hand, many transnational historical research projects, while relying on an understanding of the mechanisms of transcultural text transfer and therefore translation, do not address translation processes explicitly, systematically or in their own right, at the risk, we argue, of rendering translation work invisible.⁵ In response, we

propose that translation history, or the history of translations and their wider impacts, should be envisaged not only as a discipline within History, but also as an interdisciplinary area of studies, drawing on and, in turn, enriching, Translation Studies, Postcolonial Studies and Feminist Studies, offering a unique contribution to our understanding of the interconnectedness of cultures.

The articles collected in this Forum engage with the key concerns of translation history: a focus on actors, their political and cultural contexts, their practices, and their *active use* of texts. What has sometimes been lacking in the recently emerging translation history, is a fuller engagement with the most (self-)critical innovations in Translation Studies of the past decades which have been proposed, in particular, in the areas of Feminist Studies and of Postcolonial Studies. Translation Studies has in recent years expanded into an exciting, multi- and inter-disciplinary and increasingly global (although still too strongly Anglophone-centred) academic conversation. Indeed, as Susan Bassnett points out in the preface to the 2014 edition of her seminal work, *Translation Studies*, the discipline has evolved a great deal since that book was first published in 1980: ‘Once seen as a sub-branch of linguistics, translation today is perceived as an interdisciplinary field of study and the indissoluble connection between language and way of life has become a focal point of scholarly attention’.⁶ Feminist writers, starting in the 1970s with Adrienne Rich’s notion of the politics of location and the ‘Canadian School’ of feminist translation, asked freshly critical questions regarding the invisibility of translation in global exchanges, the naivety of the notion that ‘sisterhood is global’, the situated-ness of writer, reader and translator, and the practices and purposes of politically engaged translation. In the approaches to ‘translating feminism’ as proposed in this Forum, we not only engage with feminist texts as our object of study, but also with aspects of feminist theory as it reflects on translation, cultural transfer, global

connectedness. In general terms, feminist approaches to translation, both in a theoretical sense and in translation practice, stress that translation involves processes of re-signifying and appropriation. Such approaches critically question well-established hierarchies between languages, cultures and societies on a global scale. Questioning the establishment of regional and global ‘canons’ and of the selectivity that characterises transnational transfer, based often on cultural and gender biases, has formed an important part of this work.⁷

The four case studies presented here are situated in contexts of political activism and socially engaged writing, which we have chosen to group together under the category of feminism. In none of these cases is ‘feminism’ an uncontested concept. While Caroline Summers argues that 1980s East German author Christa Wolf was constructed as a feminist for specific reasons in the English-language context, Julia Bullock’s analysis of Japanese translations of *The Second Sex* provides an illustration of how this text came to form part of the global canon of second-wave feminism, despite the author’s own fraught relationship with feminism. Nonetheless, we find it useful to construct the category of ‘feminist texts’ and define this broadly. Referring to Joan W. Scott’s working definition of feminism,⁸ we consider those texts that are focused on women’s status in society and gendered self-discovery, are aimed at conveying a message to other women and society at large, and intend to provoke some form of socio-cultural change. The texts considered here include explicitly political manifestos (such as in the case of Chiara Bonfiglioli’s analysis of Yugoslav translations of French, British and Italian feminist texts of the 1960s-80s); scholarly and social analysis (the Japanese translations of Simone de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex*); literary fiction (Christa Woolf’s oeuvre and its translations into English), and personal testimony (as in the analysis by Ana Martins of Lelia Almeida de Gonzalez’s personal/political treatises). More precisely, the case studies are all situated in what has often been called, though not

without critique, ‘second-wave feminism’ (1960s-80s). We share the concerns of other scholars (and feminists) regarding this periodisation, too narrowly based on the writing and activism of mostly white women operating in the first world.⁹ Nonetheless, our four case studies are set in the second half of the twentieth century, a phase which we would describe as characterised by particularly intense flows of knowledge, practice and discourse across the globe, but marked by specific channels and limitations which were chiefly created by the meta-contexts of Cold War and de-colonisation, more fully discussed below.

We further propose that, given the intensification and innovation of feminist debate, writing and activism in the 1960s-80s, ‘second-wave feminism’ forms a useful historical moment for the purposes of studying transcultural connections and translations. Looking at the case studies presented here and at the recently flourishing historiography on global ‘second-wave’ feminism,¹⁰ a number of characteristics of this phase of feminist campaigning emerge: the tension between strongly utopian discourse and writing intended as practical campaigning; the tension between a deeply introspective form of writing and speaking, centred on the ‘self’ and her intimate experiences, and the need and search for collectivity, based on the (soon to be contested) notion of ‘woman’; and the aim to think and work globally, employing feminist ideas which were emerging in sometimes very different cultural contexts. While the latter theme emerges from the complex encounters between Yugoslav and West European feminists (Bonfiglioli), the search for a collectivity, in tension with complex individual experiences, characterises the writing and self-translation of ~~Leila~~Lelia de Almeida Gonzalez (Martins).

Translation has always been understood as a form of re-writing and manipulation of a text, but some feminist writers have gone further, seeing it as a form of writing in its own right.¹¹ A group of Canadian feminist scholars and writers in the 1970s worked with a number of specific translation practices that were identified as ‘feminist’; these included prefacing and footnoting, whereby the translator reflects on her work and her place, and ‘hijacking’, a notion close to re-signification, which is introduced below.¹² Other significant feminist contributions to Translation Studies have included a rendering visible of translation as a creative process which draws attention to the fact that translation work (but not translation theory) has often been implicitly or explicitly gendered as female, and this has occurred in a variety of cultural contexts. Feminist thinkers have explored the very definition of the term ‘translator’: for instance, Sherry Simon stresses that the translator is a historical and social construct, and thus the value placed on this work varies.¹³ As emerges from the articles presented here, translation work is carried out by a range of actors, including not only professional translators but also political activists, literary writers and publishers. They all carry a social status and hold a specific understanding of their own work.

Feminist writing has since the 1970s engaged in a deep exploration of how language operates to constitute, strengthen or, on the other hand, subvert gender identities, roles and relationships. Translation as an intercultural, marginal space offers an ideal setting for the de-naturalisation of hegemonic gender norms, stereotypes, and tropes, as an alternative vocabulary is introduced and a wider cultural imagination created. Feminist translation studies and practice have from the outset been driven by an explicitly political agenda and activist ethos. Feminist activists have explored ways in which translation can become an explicitly political tool, by modifying and subverting the meaning of a text, and, whether the original text is already explicitly political in its aims or not, by using it to explore new

political projects. As Claudia de Lima Costa and Sonia Alvarez put it: ‘We propose to consider translation as politically and theoretically indispensable to forging feminist, prosocial justice and antiracist, and anti-imperial political alliances and epistemologies.’¹⁴ These, and many other feminist authors, claim that feminism both requires, and is ideally suited to, the questioning of one’s own language through the introduction of another. Integral to the ‘feminist self’, they argue, is the readiness to uproot, displace and transform oneself, through actual travel or translation – which can be considered an imaginary kind of travel. The endeavour of de-stabilising one’s own cultural norms, and the words within which they are couched, and the imagining of other ones, form part of feminist experiences of self-transformation, and of wider socio-cultural transformation. Translation requires exactly this uprooting and re-placing.¹⁵

At the same time, Feminist Studies has, within academia and beyond, become globalised in a context of Anglophone and US cultural hegemony. This fact makes it all the more important to reflect critically on how feminist ideas and writing travel globally.¹⁶ Both Feminist Studies and Translation Studies have since the 1990s been transformed by insights and critiques from Postcolonial Studies. Postcolonial Studies has redrawn the map of our understandings of the processes of global translation and textual transfer, and of the geopolitical, social and economic contexts in which these processes are situated. Just as post-1945 globalisation has been shaped fundamentally by the disintegration of European empires in Africa and Asia, Translation Studies has been re-constituted in new terms by postcolonial thinkers and critics. Translation Studies has been de-stabilised by the effects of de-colonisation in at least three ways: transfers need to be approached as global processes; the very definition of translation, and the practices it encompasses as a cluster concept, need to be re-thought, to include, for instance, oral indigenous traditions; and more difficult questions

are now asked about cultural relations of power, and how global geopolitical constellations have shaped micro-transfers in specific case studies¹⁷ – such as the ones presented here. Indeed, the passage to a post-colonial world can be seen as the global context in which the four case studies analysed in this Forum are set and we will discuss this concept more fully later in this Introduction.

As Translation Studies has become such a wide-ranging and interdisciplinary field, the very term ‘translation’ has come to be used to denote a range of phenomena of cross-cultural contact. The term is often used as a metaphor, not necessarily involving an element of transfer from one language into another.¹⁸ We propose here a working definition of translation for the purpose of situating the four papers in this Forum, but which may be of use more broadly to historians of translation specifically, and which draws crucially on feminist theoretical insights. Translation can be seen as a process of cultural transfer, carried out by socially situated agents, involving the transformation of a text from one language into another, and both embedded in, and contributing to, a broader process of re-signification and locally meaningful re-contextualisation. We argue that gender history represents an ideal setting for the re-thinking of histories of translation practices and the very nature of translation. This is so because of the central contribution of feminist thought to critical reflections on translation and on processes of cultural transfer and contamination. Such a historical approach to translation, we propose, is most usefully based on case studies of texts, authors, translators, or networks. A case study method, as our four articles aim to demonstrate, elucidates the contexts in which translation as process is set, the actors involved and the practices deployed.

2. The ‘politics of location’ and the actors of translation

Thinking about translation has become central not only to feminist theory but also to activism and practice. In part this goes back to a tension in 1970s 'first-world' feminism between the stated desire to reach out to women across the globe and create a cross-cultural gendered identity on the one hand, and the naïve colour-blindness of such 'sisterhood is global' discourses, and the initial absence of a critical reflection on cultural hegemonies. Such a critical reflection did emerge in Adrienne Rich's notion of the politics of location. Influenced by the sharp critiques that were articulated by Black feminists in the US in the early 1980s, Rich described the relative privilege of her identity as a white, Jewish, North American scholar and feminist, experiencing the world in 'North American tunnel vision.'¹⁹ She expanded on this point by underlining that, 'North American feminists need to be very clear as to the particular patriarchy in which they are situated.'²⁰ In this sense, she stressed the fact that, as women, we are subject to oppression on a number of different levels and that the culture and social situation in which we live, think and speak inform our particular experience of oppression. The politics of location is often, at least in the English language, used as a starting point in feminist writing on standpoint, cultural exchange and indeed translation.

This is not to argue that before the 1970s feminists did not reflect on the political ramifications of global feminist exchange and cultural contamination. In focusing on the second half of the 20th century, as we do here, there lies a danger of failing to question second-wave feminists' own mythology of their 'discovery' of women's global connectedness. However, while a rich historiography exists on feminist movements in the 19th and earlier 20th centuries, and while transnational connections have formed part of such analyses, the flow and re-interpretation of texts has as such not often formed the focus of

study.²¹ Moreover, in many studies the focus lies with one linguistic environment (e.g., studies of English-language feminists working in the British Empire, or on British-North American connections) rather than on interlingual translation and the specific process of resignification it involves.²² Thus, translation practices and re-signification processes are not often addressed in their own right, even when transnational networks and transfers are investigated. Related to the politics of location is the notion of *re-signification*, a practice that has been proposed as specifically feminist.²³ Through re-signification, a social actor invests a text with new and subjective meaning, responding to perceived needs and tensions in her own environment. While re-signification may occur in the absence of an explicit or conscious strategy employed by the translator, deliberate re-signification is seen by many feminist translators, theorists and activists as a key practice. For instance, Anna Tsing has proposed the notion of ‘faithless translation’, whereby the attempt is precisely not to remain faithful to the original, but to make the text operate in a new and different way.²⁴

The centrality of the translator as active social agent is clear. Both feminist translation studies and the history of translation employ an open, broad notion of who the translators are – that is to say, all those engaging in translation work, regardless of profession, qualification or social status. In feminist scholarship, the focus has more often than not been on activist-translators, and indeed, the four contributions here all feature translators who envisaged themselves as feminist activists and writers, along with other actors involved in the process. Tymoczko and others have linked this to notions of community translation.²⁵ Who in the first instance is the translated text intended for? The question was and is particularly pertinent within the realm of feminist writing, which has often been imagined by the authors and translators as intended for a specific, well-defined audience, ranging from activist communities at the local or national level to women in different localities affected by similar

issues, and to ‘global sisterhood’. The imagining of a reading community has often been central to feminist activists and has helped them to articulate a shared political discourse and agenda.²⁶ The construction of such a (reading) community, is, however, not without tension or contention: who is rendered visible in this community and who is not? Who is imagined as included and who is excluded? Caroline Summers’ contribution to this Forum illustrates how Christa Wolf was consciously adopted by UK and US-based feminists and publishers into a ‘global’ (but Western-centric) community of feminist writers, to the exclusion of other female writers in Eastern Europe at the time. Another example from the contributions included in this Forum is Ana Martins’ analysis of [LeilaLelia](#) Gonzalez’s work, in which she presents a case of a feminist author consciously shifting between activist communities which she sees as distinct, and translating her own work accordingly.

Self-translation is an established practice among activists, authors and critics writing from a feminist and/or a postcolonial context. Self-translating allows the author to re-invent her own words and thoughts, as the navigation between different languages and cultural spheres creates space for a deepening of meaning.²⁷ As illustrated in Ana Martins’ article, [LeilaLelia](#) Gonzalez practised self-translation not primarily in order to preserve meaning or avoid misinterpretation, but to be able to freely *transform* meaning and adapt it to a different audience and a differently situated political agenda. Self-translation does, however, include an element of refusal – the refusal to have one’s work translated, and therefore re-signified, by others. In this sense it is related to the (feminist and postcolonial) principle of refusal of translation. Self-translation and the refusal to be translated can be two possible answers to the dangers of translation as cultural homogenisation. A key motivation behind the refusal to be translated has been one of resisting to become part of a process of sweeping global translation of locally embedded words and thoughts into English or another ‘Northern’ or globally

hegemonic language. It can be seen as the refusal to be represented in the dominant terms of hegemonic culture, and to make the knowledges of subaltern cultures readily available to those who think and speak (only) in globally dominant concepts.²⁸ To put it simply: if you claim to understand or stand in solidarity with me, endeavour to learn my language first. Reflecting on her own experience of translating authors from the Indian subcontinent into English, and the global reception and repercussions of this work, Gayatri C. Spivak has argued against those instances where translation turns into a form of ‘domestication’, which erases all traces of the cultural otherness of the original text and its author. Translation work only becomes creative and powerful, she suggests, if the cultural tension between original and translated text, and between the different contexts in which they are situated, remains unresolved.²⁹ In Julia Bullock’s contribution to this Forum, feminists critique the domestication of Simone de Beauvoir’s ideas into patriarchal Japanese culture through non-feminist translation.

The relevant actors here are not only feminist writers and translators, but also those active in wider cultural contexts such as publishers, editors and the audience with its perceived needs. This is clear particularly in Summers’ contribution: the ‘paratext’ – that is to say, those features accompanying a published text, such as the front and back cover, laudations and images – are produced most often by actors other than the translators themselves. Editors and publishers are thus able to situate the translated text in a literary, political or cultural context, as English-language publishers did for Christa Wolf’s oeuvre. In this sense, too, a focus on the micro-contexts of translation case studies creates the opportunity to extrapolate and gain insight into broader processes of cultural mediation and the various actors and strategies involved in re-signifying and politically employing a text. A central development shaping the translation of feminist texts from the late 1970s was the

emergence, in the industrialised world mainly, of feminist publishing houses. Well-known examples include Virago (UK, established in 1973), The Women's Press (UK, 1978), The Feminist Press (US, 1970), Kali for Women (India, 1984), Debate Feminista (Mexico, 1989) and La Tartaruga (Italy, 1975). Broadly, these initiatives developed out of feminist self-managed collectives and bookshops, and can be seen as an important part of wider historical developments: the partial institutionalisation of second-wave feminism on the one hand, and its professionalisation on the other.³⁰ In some cases the feminist and women's presses developed into commercial enterprises; others remained within the not-for-profit sector. Often, the production of new translations featured highly on these presses' agenda. Whether and how this phenomenon has transformed the global travelling of feminist text and discourse, remains almost entirely to be investigated historically.³¹ From the 1970s, feminist debate carved a niche for itself in the publishing market, and 'women's writing' became a standard feature in the catalogues of larger and more mainstream presses too. Gayatri Spivak has raised a question which appears pertinent here, even if it relates to a different context, the translation of indigenous literature produced in India and translated into English for global markets: to what degree do (commercial) global translations further the interests of Western markets, rather than those of the source text author(s)? Relating the observation to Summers' arguments about the re-locating of Christa Wolf as a feminist author, this is not intended as an argument against translation – but rather one which invites critical reflection on the role played by markets in establishing transnational canons on the one hand, and on the rapid transformation in recent decades of transnational feminist translation work on the other.

3. Geography, Transfers and 'Globalisation'

By looking at particular cases of translations of feminist texts, we gain insight into patterns of global transfer of political ideas, ideologies, and discourses in the second half of the 20th century. The geography of the travelling of texts in this period was shaped by two broad developments: the East-West conflict on the one hand, and de-colonisation on the other. These two global structures contributed significantly to shaping the flow of communication between countries, languages and regions. While this post-1945 global contact must be inscribed in a longer-term history of transnational and transcultural transfers, it is nevertheless the case that shifts occurred in this period in terms of the intensity of transnational contamination, as these broad twin developments created frameworks within which social and political movements across the world were often immediately and deeply influenced by similar developments in other countries.³² This particular era of globalisation was marked not only by intense contact beyond national borders but also by limitations and boundaries, and relations of power, hierarchy and control. Of central importance in understanding the changing transnational character of feminism since 1945 are the ways in which global economic and cultural hegemonies were inscribed in the (micro-)processes of the movement of people, words and social practices. In scholarly interpretations, cultural flows in the context of globalisation since World War Two have often been observed through the lens of transfers from the 'West to the rest'.³³ This involves both a failure to note transfers flowing in other directions and between non-Western other parts of the world (such as African-Brazilian cultural linkages, in the contribution by Ana Martins), failures to interrogate gaps and absences of transfer (addressed in Chiara Bonfiglioli's article), and, most importantly, a failure to understand in more diversified and sophisticated ways the precise processes of transfer.

By identifying the Cold War as a centrally important structuring context we do not argue that little East-West communication occurred. Rather, it shaped the flows of communication and modes of interpretation, including perceptions of the 'other' society, the perceived distance between the culture in which the text originated and the one in which it is being translated, and the understanding of whether and how a text originated in this other culture might be relevant in one's own environment. As emerges from Caroline Summers' contribution, an understanding of how a sense of belonging is created by geopolitical structures is essential if we are to properly grasp the ways in which West German author Christa Wolf was re-signified in feminist and pacifist circles in the UK in the 1970s-80s. Imagined transnational and shared interests, in this case pan-European security and nuclear disarmament, underpinned the acute sense with which British feminists felt connected to the East German author - in addition to the imagining of a shared canon, in this case through the invoking of Virginia Woolf, to whom Christa Wolf is likened in British feminist commentary.

One of the most important critiques of Western-centric notions of 20th- and 21st-century globalisation is contained in the concept of 'scattered hegemonies', first introduced by Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan in relation to transnational feminist practices.³⁴ The presumed proliferation of notions of women's rights and gender equality, once again implicitly or explicitly Western-defined, is often placed at the centre of celebratory accounts of globalisation. Therefore, it is significant that in the 1990s it was within *feminist* scholarship that the sharpest critiques of such an understanding of globalisation emerged, as well as alternative readings of the meanings and effects of global connectedness. A landmark collection of contributions to feminist scholarship, *Scattered Hegemonies* employs a number of case studies to address the production, travel and re-signification of feminist language and

practice, within specific local contexts and using a global framework that stresses postcolonial cultural, political and economic relationships. Grewal and Kaplan's framework is important to historical understandings of global transfers of feminist debate for two sets of reasons. Firstly, they articulated a devastating critique of the second-wave Western feminist notion that 'sisterhood is global', while maintaining a commitment to think about the global interdependency of feminist thought and practice. The four contributions here can also be inscribed in a dismantling of the 'sisterhood is global' myth in a variety of ways: while Summers and Bonfiglioli note instances of absence of East-West transfers, Bullock stresses the local re-framing of a transnationally travelling text and Martins analyses an attempt to break down homogenising notions of continental (in this case Latin American) sisterhood. Secondly, Grewal, Kaplan and other postcolonial critics understand transnational connections not in terms of transfers from nation A to nation B (as the term 'transnationalism' seems to suggest, and for which it has been much critiqued), but rather, in terms of global contaminations, the effects of which potentially exist in any single location, resulting from migration, travel and movement, and creating hybrid and diasporic cultural identities. Hegemonic relationships, in this context, do not exist only between, say, the United States and Chile under Pinochet – rather they are scattered across societies and cultures, in economic, cultural and political interactions between and within national borders.

Ana Martins' contribution illustrates the complex ways in which geopolitical and cultural hegemonies framed ~~Leila~~Lelia Gonzalez's feminist writing – or her writing as a feminist. Exceedingly conscious of her own location as a black woman in Brazil, her writing, re-writing and self-translation was an exercise in mapping the unequal cultural relationships between Latin American countries and their former colonisers, between Brazil and Spanish-centred notions of Latin American continental belonging, and regarding the status of African

descendants and African culture in Brazil. Cultural hegemonies can be observed, too, in the very different context of post-war Japan. Although not situated in a post-colonial context, transfers between Japan and Western Europe in the 1950s-60s were, nonetheless, saturated by orientalism, perceptions of racial and cultural identity, constructions of the self and the other between Europe and Asia, and the porous boundaries of cultural and transnational belonging. Like most West European countries, post-war Japan underwent a process of cultural and economic 'Westernisation' under US leadership, which was aimed at creating not only a security alliance, but also a shared sense of belonging and identity.³⁵ Cold War alliances and hegemonies facilitated intense cultural traffic, but they were also the object of feminist and other critiques. As discussed by Chiara Bonfiglioli, from the 1970s onwards Yugoslav feminists re-signified French, British and Italian feminist debates in order not only to critique their own society (which, according to its own ideology had resolved the 'woman question'), but also to question Western cultural hegemony globally. In 1960s-70s Yugoslavia, frequent and open communication occurred across the Iron Curtain between feminist collectives, publishers and writers. However, it was shaped by perceptions in the East of the relevance and, in a sense, universality of feminist debates in France, Italy, the UK and the USA. Inversely, women in the latter countries engaged more superficially with Yugoslav feminist debates, their perception of these debates shaped by notions of the unique nature of women's lives in socialist countries.³⁶ Another instance of missed connections can be seen in the lack of response to Christa Wolf in Cold War West Germany. While, as discussed by Caroline Summers, the East German author resonates for very particular reasons with feminists and pacifists in the UK and the Anglophone world more broadly, West German editions of her work were largely ignored by feminists in the FRG. UK and US feminists strongly felt that the writings by Christa Woolf were significant universally and to Western women too, but

only if re-framed within a certain genre and within a specific political message: as subversive feminist writing, aimed at enacting social change – both in the East and in the West.

In this and many other examples, the source text is irreversibly transformed through its uses and interpretations in other parts of the world. A revealing example, thoroughly researched by Kathy Davis, is the way in which the women's sexual health manual *Our Bodies Ourselves*, first published in English by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective in 1971, became a feminist classic that travelled transnationally and existed in myriad variations across the globe. Translated into over 40 languages and, as argued by Davis, influencing the feminist politics of the body across five continents, the original was thoroughly transformed, even de-stabilised, by the subsequent translations, leading to the production of a number of abridged versions in English.³⁷ As Walter Benjamin knew, translations are part of the afterlife of a text, actively contributing to a constitution of the text's global and historical meaning. They create sites of reception, commentary and influence, which later readers are unable to disentangle from the text's earlier meanings.³⁸ As the four papers that follow illustrate, the transformations that occur can never be just a matter of words and phrases. Historically contingent and inextricably linked with the lives and locations of the writers and translators, the processes involved in the translation of feminist texts – and indeed in the interpretation of translations by readers and historians – create the potential to open up new and *transgressive* conceptual spaces, to make new connections and imagine different societies.

¹ For instance, DuBois, E. C., K. Oliviero (2009), 'Circling the Globe: International Feminism Reconsidered, 1920 to 1975,' *Women's Studies International Forum*, 32:1.

² Inderpal Grewal & Caren Kaplan, eds. *Scattered Hegemonies* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 12-13.

³ Anthony Pym, *Method in Translation History* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1998), pp. 1-6.

⁴ Lieven D'Hulst, *Essais d'histoire de la traduction. Avatars de Janus* (Classiques Garnier, 2014).

⁵ One exception, and a ground-breaking book which established translation history as part of (European) early modern history, is: Peter Burke, Po-chia Hsia, eds. *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁶ Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies* (Routledge, 2014), p. 3.

⁷ For instance, Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler, eds. *Translation and Power* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2002).

⁸ As discussed by Karen Offen in 'Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach', *Signs* (1988, 14:1), pp. 1191-1157, drawing on Joan W. Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,' *American Historical Review* (1986, 91: 5), 1053-75.

⁹ For a critique of the standard periodisation of feminism in the US context, see Nancy Hewitt (ed.) *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of US Feminism* (Rutgers University Press, 2010).

¹⁰ Just a few examples: Setsu Shigematsu, *Scream from the Shadows: The Women's Liberation Movement in Japan* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Stephanie Gilmore, Sara Evans, eds. *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States* (University of Illinois Press, 2008); Kristina Schulz, *Der lange Atem der Provokation: Die Frauenbewegung in Frankreich und der Bundesrepublik* (Campus Verlag, 2002).

¹¹ Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevere, *Translation, History and Culture* (Pinter, 1990).

¹² Luise von Flotow, 'Feminist Translation: Contexts, Practices and Theories', *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Redaction* (1991, 4:2), pp. 69-84.

¹³ Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (Routledge, 1996), p. 42.

¹⁴ Claudia de Lima Costa and Sonia E. Alvarez, 'Dislocating the Sign: Toward a Translocal Feminist Politics of Translation', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* (2014, 39:3), pp. 557-563.

¹⁵ Costa, Alvarez, 'Dislocating the Sign'.

¹⁶ Lola Sanchez, 'Translations That Matter: About a Foundational Text in Feminist Studies in Spain', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* (2014, 39:3), pp. 570-596.

¹⁷ Maria Tymoczko, 'Translation and Political Engagement: Activism, Social Change and the Role of Translation in Geopolitical Shifts', *The Translator* (2000, 6:1), pp. 23-47.

¹⁸ Joao Ferreira Duarte, 'Highlighting the Shadows: Translation and the Space of History', *Novas historias literarias* (2000), pp. 319-326.

¹⁹ Adrienne Rich, 'North American Tunnel Vision (1983)', in Adrienne Rich, *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1986), p. 160-166.

²⁰ Rich, 'North American Tunnel Vision', p. 166.

²¹ Two exceptions are: E. H. Botting and C. H. Matthews, 'Overthrowing the Floresta—Wollstonecraft Myth for Latin American Feminism', *Gender & History* (2014, 26), pp. 64–83 and Carol C. Chin, 'Translating the New Woman: Chinese Feminists View the West, 1905-1915', *Gender & History* (2006, 18:3), pp. 490-518. See also the recent large-scale research project on the flow and reception of women's literary texts in Europe led by Henriette Partzsch, *Hera Project Travelling Texts 1790-1914*, <http://travellingtexts.huygens.knaw.nl/>

²² For instance, Lucy Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde: Transatlantic Encounters of the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2009). Partly, the absence of this particular type of analysis is due to a Western (English- and French-language) bias in the very notion and periodisation of 'first-wave' feminism. These limitations are acknowledged, for instance, in this collection of documents, with most texts in English and a few translations from French: Maureen Moynagh and Nancy Forestell, *Documenting First Wave Feminisms: Volume 1: Transnational Collaborations and Crosscurrents* (University of Toronto Press 2012).

²³ Simon, *Gender in Translation*.

²⁴ Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, 'Transitions as Translations', in Scott, Joan W., Cora Kaplan, Debra Keated (eds). *Transitions, Environments, Translations: Feminisms in international politics* (Routledge, 1997), pp. 253-272. A similar proposition was made earlier in: de Lotbiniere-Harwood, Susanne, *Re-belle et infidele. La traduction comme pratique de re-écriture au féminin* (Toronto Woman's Press, 1991).

²⁵ Maria Tymoczko, 'Translation and Political Engagement: Activism, Social Change and the Role of Translation in geopolitical Shifts', *The Translator* (2000, 6:1), pp. 23-47; Lawrence

Venuti, 'Translation, Community, Utopia', in Lawrence Venuti (ed.) *The Translation Studies Reader* (Routledge, 2000), pp. 469-488.

²⁶ Lucy Delap, 'Feminist Bookshops, Reading Cultures and the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain, c. 1974-2000', *History Workshop Journal* (2016, 81:1), pp. 171-196.

²⁷ A critical approach to the concept: Susan Bassnett, 'The Self-Translator as Re-Writer', in Anthony Cordingley, *Self-Translation: Brokering Originality in Hybrid Culture* (Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 13-26. Among many practical examples of and theoretical approaches to self-translation in China, see the discussion in: Zhongli Yu, *Translating Feminism in China: Gender, Sexuality and Censorship* (Routledge, 2014).

²⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A critique of postcolonial reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* (Harvard University Press, 1999). See also Homi Bhabha's arguments on cultural translation and the resistance to complete integration. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 1994).

²⁹ Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation', in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (Routledge 1993), pp. 179-200.

³⁰ For an understanding of post-1980 feminist action in terms of a process of institutionalisation see: Dorothy E. McBride and Amy G. Mazur. *The Politics of State Feminism: Innovations in Comparative Research* (Temple University Press, 2012).

³¹ On the significant role played by feminist presses in Latin America see for instance Margara Millan, 'Revistas y políticas de traducción del feminismo mexicano contemporáneo', *Revista Estudios feministas* (2009, 17:3), pp. 819-846.

³² Maud Anne Bracke and James Mark, 'Between decolonization and the Cold War: Transnational activism and its limits in Europe, 1950s-90s', *Journal of Contemporary History* (2015, 50:3), pp. 403-417.

³³ Feminist critiques of such a vision in, for instance: Marianne H. Marchand and Anne Sisson Runyan, eds. *Gender and Global Restructuring: Sightings, Sites and Resistances* (Routledge, 2011, 2nd ed.).

³⁴ Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, eds. *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices* (University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

³⁵ Jan Bardsley, *Women and Democracy in Postwar Japan* (Bloomsbury, 2015).

³⁶ See also Sherry Simon's notion of missed connections, referring to the (partial) translation and re-signification of French feminist theory into English. Simon, *Gender in Translation*, pp. 86-110.

³⁷ Kathy Davis, *The Making of Our Bodies, Ourselves: How Feminism Travels Across Borders* (Duke University Press, 2007).

³⁸ Walter Benjamin, *The Task of the Translator* (1923; transl. Harry Zohn) in Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, pp. 15-22.